

Long Island, but none could be discovered among the pines and oaks on the slopes about Deep Pond out on the level country to the south of Wading River. The ants invariably had their nests in protected places on the hills, where the ground was somewhat barren, such as openings in the woods with sheltering trees and thickets to the north. On these hills grow a few pitch pines and red cedars, but the trees are nearly all deciduous, and the environment does not suggest the sites commonly selected for nest building by *Atta septentrionalis* at Lakehurst and elsewhere in the pine barrens of New Jersey.

The finding of the fungus-growing ant at Wading River, N. Y., extends its known range considerably, and adds one more species to the fauna of the state. While the nearest reported colonies are in New Jersey about one hundred miles to the southwest, it may be safely predicted that some connecting colonies will be found in the future.

JOHN ABBOT, OF GEORGIA.

BY ROBERT PERCY DOW,

BROOKLYN, N. Y.

When John Francillon, silversmith, of the Strand, London, was engaged in making a notable collection of insects, mostly lepidoptera, for twenty years or more from about 1790, and, as was customary among the leading collectors, made a business of selling his duplicates, he offered among other things many unusually fine specimens from the "Province of Georgia, in North America." These, if they were lepidoptera or of other prominently winged orders, were pinned and expanded with a degree of skill which commanded the admiration of the ablest of the Aurelians, by which name the English butterfly collector has been known since a number of them formed the Aurelian Club, with Moses Harris at the Swan Tavern in 1745.¹ Georgia was then far more inaccessible to an Englishman than Java or Cape of Good Hope. Moreover, the prices were very reasonable—

¹ The original Moses Harris is not to be confused with his famous nephew of the same name, the copper-plate engraver, who published the *Aurelian* and other works, drew the plates for Drury's masterpiece, and was secretary of the second Aurelian Club, 1762-66.

six pence per specimen if a round number were taken. If one desired a *Polyphemus*, or *Sphinx* (a particularly well represented group), or any other giant, one must pay accordingly. Besides, there were offered at similar prices inflated larvæ, seldom seen at all and so cleverly done that much was made of the circumstance by Kirby and Spence in their famous "Introduction into Entomology." Again, one could buy from Francillon wonderful water color drawings, not only of mature insects but of their early stages and food plants. With the drawings came manuscript notes of description with English names of insects and plants. The drawings were remarkable for excellence and were absurdly cheap. Francillon was not communicative about their origin. It sufficed most customers to be told that he had a correspondent in Georgia. A few of the elect knew that the name of this man was John Abbot, but none knew his address. It was business for Francillon, for he bought at 3d. and did not propose that his wares should be secured by others from first hands to his own undoing.

Of these drawings several thousand exist in Europe. The British Museum has seventeen stout quarto volumes of them, all bought from Francillon, carrying his name, book stamp, and printed title pages, dated 1792 to 1804. There are volumes of them in the Museums of Oxford, Paris, Zurich and elsewhere. The Boston Society of Natural History has two such volumes, both remarkably fine and one probably the choicest known. Only two have been reproduced and published with credit given to the artist. Sir James Edward Smith of Edinburgh bought from Francillon drawings to make 104 plates and figuring 24 lepidopterous species and bore the expense of publishing the two sumptuous folio volumes which appeared in 1797 and which are now among the classics. Let us be fair about the laurels not on Abbot's brow. It was certainly Smith's privilege to give scientific names to these undescribed species. He bought types, as well as drawings from Francillon. If you or I bought from a New York dealer two dozen butterflies from Africa, raised there by a dealer who sold them for profit, and who was not known to you save by name alone, and you found them to be new species, would you credit his name with yours as the describer? Moreover, Smith never saw or heard directly from Abbot. Abbot knew nothing of the book until long after publication. The credit given to the worker in the field is all that the finest sense

of honor can demand. The title of the book is: "The Natural History of the Rarer Lepidopterous Insects of Georgia, collected from the observations of John Abbot, with the plants on which they feed." The authorship of every species is now universally credited to "Smith and Abbot." No credit whatever is given for the work done by Abbot, utilized in the volumes of Boisduval and Leconte.

Who and what, then, was John Abbot of Georgia? If Francillon was uncommunicative, Abbot was more so, especially concerning the first forty years of his life. One wonders whether there might not have been a sinister reason for it. Emphatically, no! The record of fifty years of Abbot in Georgia shows nothing but a sweet soul. All that is known about the man to the present moment is summarized by Dr. Samuel H. Scudder in *Canadian Entomologist*, Vol. XX, pp. 150-54 and a note by W. F. Kirby, *ibid.*, pp. 230-32. As this volume is in limited circulation, the essential statements follow here. It may be noted that the facts are mainly adduced from his work, the conjectures generally as unsafe as deduction from circumstantial evidence is apt to be.

Oral tradition is all we have had. It is not known where he was born. That he was an Englishman is assumed from his name. His one portrait shows an Irish face, a frail body, and the cotton jean clothing of a Georgia plantation. Scudder says he was about thirty when he went to America in about 1790, and that he was engaged by three or four leading English lepidopterists to collect for their cabinets. The version of the careful Dr. H. Hagen is different. Hagen calls him unequivocally "privatlehrer"—private tutor, the inference being that Abbot went to Georgia in charge of the scion of some wealthy Georgian planter.¹ Scudder says he settled after some travel at Jacksonborough, Scriven Co. The correct spelling is Screven. Scudder asserts that he returned to England about 1810, where he was living in 1840, at an age of "probably above eighty."

Smith says he was given to rearing insects in England from childhood. Abbot himself says, indirectly, that he was fond of drawing plants all his life. That the portrait in the British Museum collection of his drawings is of himself and by himself there is no reasonable

¹ As Dr. Hagen has confused in his *Bibliotheca* two Abbots, one a Scotch clergyman, it is quite possible that the word "privatlehrer" also belongs to the latter.

doubt. This portrait is reproduced by Scudder in his *Butterflies of North America*. His handwriting is well known from his notes which accompanied his drawings, but this signature has never been seen in the memory of living men until recently. It is therefore reproduced below.¹

John Abbot was born in 1750. His education was limited. His grammatical blunders would be unpardonable in any grade above elementary school. His name does not appear in the matriculation lists of any university or great public school in the United Kingdom, without which a private tutorship would be out of the question. He did, however, teach school in Georgia, where at the time educational facilities were almost non-existent, and where the second reader was above the average comprehension. He was not a member of the short-lived Entomological Club of London, 1781-3. He never heard of the Linnean system until after 1805. That he was an Englishman and that he did engage to collect insects for Francillon rests on tradition too widespread to be controvertible. The date, 1790, is a reasonable inference, as the results arriving in England date from 1793. If he did return to England about 1810, it was for a visit only. His later home was in Bulloch Co., just across the Ogeechee River from Screven Co., and a day's journey by wagon from Savannah. He never acquired wealth. At best he harvested a few bales of cotton, sold through the same Savannah factor that was employed by the prosperous grower of Sea Island cotton, Dr. Oemler, of Wilmington Island. His old age was simple in the extreme. A couple of dollars a week or less supplied his wants. He dreamed of no laurels to be placed upon his brow, unless some stranger held out this will o' the wisp in his age and infirmity. In all probability he lies in an unmarked grave in Bulloch Co., for in those days tombstones were unusual, vital statistics were not kept there and even land titles were seldom registered.

Who was John Abbot? He was an untutored optimist, with a constitutional smile, who looked forward only to the day's reward, who had talent with the brush, who had the assiduity to rear every insect species he could for over fifty years. May the earth lie lightly upon him. No man has done better.

¹ Some years ago Quaritch, the London bookseller, secured a small quarto volume of the drawings, which contains an undoubtedly authentic signature.

A recent sketch of the career of Dr. Thaddeus W. Harris, of Harvard University, and of his entomological association inspired a fresh search into the archives kept by that eminent pioneer in the attic of his late residence in Cambridge. The first result was a neatly tied package of about 200 letters, dated 1825 to 1835, from entomologists all over the world. Later, many hundred, received by his father, Rev. Thaddeus Mason Harris, author of a *Natural History of the Bible*, were discovered. The two letters reproduced here are by the courtesy of Edward Doubleday Harris, son of Dr. Harris and a member of the New York Entomological Society. They are given *literatim*, for to correct a misspelled word would be a historical crime.

Dr. Oemler is the source of most of our knowledge of Abbot. He bought what he considered the best collection of Abbot drawings in existence, the one now in the Boston Society of Natural History. The Leconte collection remains to be rediscovered.

Rev. T. M. Harris, fatigued with the enormous labor of classifying the correspondence and documents of Geo. Washington for the history of Jared Sparks, and contemplating a new edition of the *Natural History of the Bible*, visited Savannah. Here he learned from Dr. Oemler of Abbot, the remarkable delineator and breeder of insects and went to see him. Hence the correspondence, of which six letters have so far been discovered. The two presented here need no farther annotation. The misspellings of Dr. Oemler are, of course, explained by the unfamiliarity of a German with a few English words. The misspellings of Abbot reveal the man.

Major John Eatton Leconte, father of the Greatest Coleopterist, and himself an entomologist outranked only by Harris and Say, was not disposed to be communicative about his sources of specimens or drawings, for, although he knew Harris well from 1830, he did not mention his Georgia discovery. Leconte came of a Georgia family, and both his father and brother were ardent botanists on their Georgia plantation. No fellow botanist could live in that state without discovery by the Lecontes, who were people of wealth, power, culture and wide acquaintance.

FROM DR. OEMLER TO DR. T. W. HARRIS.

SAVANNAH April 27, 1834.

Dear Sir

This morning I had the pleasure of a conversation with your good father respecting Mr. Abbott. I there learned, that you were under the impression that the old man was "now blind and solely supported by Major Le Conte." I have it in my power to contradict both. Mr. A. used glasses ever since I have known him (1805) and, by means of them, paints the smallest Insects with pretty much correctness, but his hearing faculties are much impaired, the last time I saw him (1825) I had to use the Slate to converse with him. But notwithstanding this misfortune, he was cheerful, and his constitutional smile never left his countenance. He is now, I am told, very corpulent, but still exercises his pursuit of hunting birds and drawing—but engages boys to run after Butterflies. As for to be *supported* (?) by Major Le Conte that is not so, except the petty allowance of Six and a quarter Cents for the drawing of an Insect (be it a flea, or a Bombyx Polyphemus) with a full account of its natural history, may be called such.

You think, Mr. Abbott should be known to the world.—I have always thought so too, so that the Laurals, which are assumed by Smith and Le Conte should be placed on the proper brow. To do this has long been my intention, and for to be enabled to do so, I have prevailed on him to furnish me with some notes. I am satisfied that justice be done him, no matter by whom, and as I consider *you* more capable than myself, I surrender these Notes into your hands. They are, as you will perceive, not concluded yet—I will send you the continuation and any thing else desirable that can be procured by me.

You will be astonished when you hear that a man, so long amusing himself with Natural History, should never have been inclined to pursue it scientifically, he, although now 83 years of age, is still in the simplicity of a School boy. He has been drawing plants since his boyhood and never knew any thing of Linneus' Classification till I demonstrated it to him and created his astonishment. After this, he never committed again the error to paint different numbers of stamens on the same flower.

Perhaps Mr. A. may be dead by this time, and then you would not get the painting your father ordered, and for this reason I send you one of his productions that you may judge of his abilities.

with esteem & regards

Yours

Oemler.

28th.

The above was intended to be sent by your father, who left here for Charleston this morning at 9 o'clock. I was but one minute too late, when I arrived on the wharf, the Steamer was on the way. Hearing that some young ladies are going to morrow to Boston direct, I now forward this by them, but the drawing I have to withhold, not wishing to fold it up.

Professor Harris,

Cambridge.

O.

FROM JOHN ABBOTT TO DR. T. W. HARRIS.

BULLOCH COUNTY, GEORGIA Aug'st 30, 1835

TO DR. THADDEUS WILLIAM HARRIS

Dear Sir

After having entirely given over all hopes of having the pleasure of hearing from You, I was agreeably surprized in receiving on the 23d. last, the favor of yours of the 11th. Feb'y last, a delay I cannot account for

In reply to your request at what price I sell my collections of Insects, my usual price is 6 dollars per hundred large & small rare & common, My charge to Mr. Le Conte for my Drawings & for whom I continue to draw for every Year, the size of which I have figured at the end of this Letter, is .16 for a dollar, they mostly are small Insects, & many are Minutia, & if small & will shew better, something magnified, he must be in possession of .2 or 3000, of them if the size of the paper & the Insect requires it, a larger price in proportion, 25 cents, but never exceeding 50 cents.

I shall complete this Autumn my collections of Insects & set of drawings, & next Spring can contract with You for both, if You think proper, in the mean time, You can send me word, what particular Insects you want, and what Order or Genus You wou'd prefer to have drawn, to begin with, or if only the most rare, or more generally as I meet with them and what size paper, as I suppose you wou'd desire them to be uniform, Mr. Le Conte preferred a single Insect on a paper, as he said he cou'd then class them as he received them.

I have not been able yet to ascertain the difference between the Larva of the Crantor & green Shinx, the color of both is sometimes green, & sometimes claret colored, & both feed on other plants besides Grape, I have only observed that the Crantor is much more rare than the other. The severe cold last Winter, must certainly have killed many in the Woods, as it did all I had in Chrysalis in the house, & I have never yet observed both Shinxes & Larva's so rare as this last Summer, I have therefore had no opportunity to make any further observation, Le Conte insists they are one Species

I have only as yet met with but 2 of the Larva you mention to be found in rotten wood, they both died, without changing, I can't say what kind they produce. I have figured the last I met with from a sketch I have yet by me, it looked in a dark room its whole length like a brilliant diamond It was of a color & size of the drawing

I find it very difficult to know what Insects are rare & what are common, except a very few kinds, & they perhaps are not to be found all over the State. Some Years ago I met with a plenty, (then only) in a small Swamp field, the (*Colias philodice*) since which I have not seen one any where.

Every Year I have observed some few kinds to be plenty, if not common & then not to be met again with, for some years after some few kinds, I reckoned common 3 or 4 years ago, I can't meet with a single one now some plenty on one side of a Creek, & none on the other

Flowers is also local, as well as rare I have met with at times a single specimen, that I have not seen before, nor a single one since but still it might be local, plenty in small spot elsewhere. There is a great variety of flowers in Georgia, but I am no Botanist, yet I am always much pleased, when I meet with any that is new to me.

There is a Gentleman in Savannah who wanted me to make an Herbarium for him to send as a present to a friend a Botanist at the North, indeed I had promised him, but as I was very seriously indisposed in the Spring, I gave it out, & collected Insects only, I understand he is much disappointed, but I don't know if he wants me to do it, next Year as yet—

I shall wait with much anxious expectation, for the Insects you are so kind to promise me, as a few only that are new to me, or some that I have not met of later Years, will be equally acceptable and give me much pleasure.

Please to address your letters to John Abbot Bulloch Co. Georgia, to the care of Mr David Bell. Savannah Hoping to hear from You again soon I remain very respectfully and sincerely

Yours truly John Abbot

If Dr. Harris received either drawings or specimens resulting from this correspondence, they would be now at the rooms of the Boston Society of Natural History. None such are there. Mr. E. D. Harris recalls clearly, that, as a lad, circa 1851-2, he watched his father devote an afternoon to engrossing a neat title page to a volume of drawings of John Abbot. Apparently this was for a volume of drawings supposed at the time to be Abbot's, which Edward Doubleday bought at a second hand book store for seven guineas and sent as a gift. This volume was by a pupil or imitator and is now with the Boston Society of Natural History. It must be inferred that Abbot could not complete the promised herbarium, that physical disability prevented him from making the promised drawings. There is but one later reference known. White, *Instances of Longevity* is Screven Co., 1849, cites John Abbot.